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CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN EDUCATION: A POLITICAL BATTLEGROUND WITH TEACHERS AS THE CASUALTIES

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ABSTRACT

The implications for critical race theory in public education has received much political discussion and debate. Many elected officials and lobbyists for and against policy reforms have vehemently engaged the subject matter. Despite this intense debate, politicians and citizens do not have a clear understanding of the origins and content of critical race theory. This research addresses the shortfall by tracking critical race theory at pivotal points, beginning with its introduction in the field of legal studies to its recent emergence in common education policy discourse. Additionally, it aggregates data about the laws and directives that have been introduced by federal, state, and local policymakers' impacting educators' capacity to talk about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classrooms. This paper concludes by discussing the emerging implications which are seeming to have high stake consequences for teachers, schools, and the American education system. It also suggests how future discussions may engage the conversation in a more meaningful way.

INTRODUCTION

Education can be a haven for ideological thought. However, in recent years the schools where children and young adults are supposed to be exposed to various ideas has been turned into a political battleground over the issue of critical race theory (CRT). Policymakers, especially those who are more conservative, are fighting about whether race, gender, sexual orientation, equity, and inclusion should be addressed in K-12 and college classrooms. These discussions are occurring publicly through many avenues including social media, protests at schools, and current legislation. While policymakers engage the issue, there is misinformation in the general populace regarding what CRT is, its history, and its poten-

tial impact on public education. This literature review will explore CRT and its tenants. It will provide academic evidence on core components of CRT and current policies such as those existing in the state of Florida, which is known for its extreme political campaign against CRT.

One of the hallmarks that Florida has presented the country has been the Stop Woke Act. The Stop Woke Act restricts how race is taught to students in public K-12 schools and colleges. Included in the list of race-prohibited content are implicit biases, systemic racism, and the ability to teach existing critiques of the U.S. (Reilly, 2022). Although laws of this nature are not limited to Florida, Florida has been much more aggressive than other states because its laws apply to colleges as well K-12 schools. Florida has also passed an additional law that threatens access to opportunity and knowledge for a diverse group of people. In Florida Senate Bill 266, public colleges and universities are prohibited from utilizing state funds on programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (Diaz, 2023). Florida educators have been tasked with responding to each new law, which has created hardships for many academic disciplines.

Laws targeting race in education and other measures taken to restrict minority individuals in Florida have made a tense environment for many people. Things have gotten so bad in Florida that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, 2023) has issued a travel advisory for Florida in a press release. The press release indicates that it is an aggressive environment for marginalized groups where they and their complex achievements and struggles are not appreciated. Alternatively, Ron DeSantis, Florida's governor, claims that Florida's laws are preventing "state-sanctioned racism," "indoctrination," and "teaching kids to hate" (Staff, 2021).

As stated earlier, the concepts addressed by Florida's laws have been referred to as CRT. Given the importance of CRT and impending policy conversations, it is crucial to develop a breadth of knowledge on current public policies targeting CRT in public education. As such, the literature review that follows seeks to explore the impact on school administrators and educators in the public school system as a result of emerging anti-CRT laws. To complete this objective, critical race theory will be traced from its roots to its emergence in current politics. From there, this paper will transition to an analysis of the anti-CRT policies being passed. This analysis will focus on examining the political context that motivated these laws to be written, the texts of anti-CRT laws, and public opinion on the matter. The focus will then shift to the impact these laws are having on school staff. Specifically, the section will focus on the

consequences for teachers who violate the laws, the punishments that affect school districts, and how teachers have coped with the new laws.

What is CRT and How Did it End Up in Education?

To truly understand CRT and why it is being discussed in education, it is important to trace the historical origins of CRT in public education. CRT came about in the 1970s when the theory emerged as a subsection of legal scholarship (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT was created because America had finally begun overturning blatantly discriminatory laws, but the status of people previously harmed by these laws was not improving (Busey et al., 2022; Peller, 2021). Scholars were confused because the laws ending racial discrimination should have worked in favor of marginalized groups to better their lives. Instead, those groups of people maintained the hardships they had been experiencing prior to these laws passing, with only a few lucky enough to see improvement. This sparked an investigation by legal scholars as to why the gains promised during the civil rights era were not realized. The reasons proposed by these individuals, and the methods for combating this became known as CRT.

Through the work of the foundational critical race scholars, a general knowledge manifested explaining the reasoning for America's racialized society. The basis for understanding many of the ideas of critical race theory is that skin color has not historically been a distinguishing factor between groups of people. It has only become a method of differentiating between people in the past few centuries because of the power race has been given socially, especially in justifying slavery (Reece, 2019). Critical race theorists believe that skin color has fueled differences between groups of people in America because of the weight it has been given in determining socioeconomic standing prior to modern history. The foundational explanation critical race theorists have provided explaining the roots of racism guides the tenets that make up this theory.

There are many concepts that make up the scholarly perspective of CRT. One of the principal tenets of CRT is that racism is commonplace in American society. This means that racism can function through both deliberate action and subconscious learned behaviors. It means that individuals can behave in racist fashions without being intentionally discriminatory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solorazo, 1997). Another tenet expresses that when changes to America's socio-political climate are introduced through color blind legislation, the measures are largely ineffective because they are written to maintain dominant power structures.

Under CRT, people of color are more able to challenge these power dynamics because of the experience they hold with dealing with oppression in their daily lives. Critical race theorists use the knowledge generated by people of color to guide their viewpoint. Along with this, scholars utilize various disciplines to conceptualize this theory. Lastly, there are some critical race theorists that believe that the systems that keep people of color oppressed in America do not change unless it benefits the white majority. This means that change for marginalized groups does not occur because of a need to do good in the world: it occurs because the dominant group has something to gain or lose.

Critical race theory made the transition from existing in the legal field to education scholarship in the 1990s. The foundational knowledge from CRT was applied in understanding the inequities in school systems. In this analysis, biased outcomes in the school system such as higher suspension rates for African American students and inequitable school funding were explained as being the result of structuralized racism. Specifically, this has stemmed from the understanding of whiteness as property in which White people get to define cultural norms, reap the benefits from the norms that they set, define who fits into these norms and when, and the right to keep people from achieving the set standards (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Since CRT transitioned to discussion in the field of education, its initial purpose for being introduced in educational discourse was diluted. After the foundation studies addressing CRT in schools, it took a while for the idea to gain traction. Although there were a few studies written in the 2000s, most scholarships emerged during the 2010s. Even though CRT has become more widespread in education, the foundational knowledge that makes up CRT has been utilized in a way that does not match what CRT is supposed to be (Busey et al., 2022). When CRT has been present in education research, it has been ill-defined. Researchers have not shown a consensus between articles on the definition of CRT. Authors of research articles often focus on singular concepts within CRT rather than the theory in its entirety. By being selective about which parts of the theory they discuss, scholars have failed to address issues that critical race theory aims to address, and means critical race theory is actually not being taught in schools.

When teachers have discussed issues of identity and America's troubled racial past, the talks have been much less radical than the initial principles of CRT. One such method is Ledesma and Calderon's (2015), critical race pedagogy (CRP). CRP examines discrimination in current

curriculums and how to counteract it. A key component in this pedagogy is counter storytelling. This component invites students to share their lived experiences, where the instructor can assist students in conceptualizing their experiences and connecting it to history. In other classrooms, students learn America's history through being provided various resources on a topic, being allowed to question those sources, and coming to their own conclusions (Griffin & James, 2018).

The most modern form of critical race theory strays from the initial iteration and the watered-down version present in education. The current political climate has conflated CRT to be a variety of different topics referenced under a single name. Broadly, CRT has been used as an umbrella term for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); social justice; LGBTQ+ rights; and antiracism (Pollock et al., 2022). This definition has been most commonly cited by those who claim to oppose CRT. Overall, the CRT definitions have been inconsistent (Busey et al., 2022). By looking at the various definitions, the thoughts and feelings that guide political action against CRT helps to make clearer sense of the laws. Specific definitions of CRT from sources have been vague or deferred to other topics, with very little clarity. There is a general understanding that CRT and the fringe topics that have been associated with it prioritize identity as a method of understanding relations between American citizens. With identity at the center of conversation, conservatives believe that everyone has been split up into groups of victim and subjugator. Through their lens, people who support CRT view most groups of people in society as being diminished by White individuals who hold power and privilege in American life. Contrasting to this, those who are against CRT argue that White individuals are unjustly accused of being racist (whether it is an intentional action or not) and that CRT promotes reverse racism against White people (Filimon & Ivănescu, 2023; Morgan, 2022). The overarching critique that conservatives give against CRT is that it is detrimental to America. In the words of Gloria Ladson-Billings, one of the principal researchers who advocated for CRT in education research, CRT has been manifested to address any identity related descriptor that has generated controversy (Anderson, 2022).

CRT has had various definitions since it was first introduced in the 1970s. These definitions have strayed from the true intentions of the theory since it began being modified, especially once it was introduced into education. Once CRT entered political conversations rather than being contained in academic research, there was a radical shift in the way CRT was understood. This revolution in thought has influenced politi-

cal actors such as state legislatures, school districts, interest groups, and many others into taking action against CRT. In the next section of this paper, state laws and other policies based on the most recent definition of CRT will be examined.

What do the Policies Say?

Current events have influenced efforts to restrict discussions of race and racism in American schools. The catalyst for the lawmaking began in Summer 2020 with the police killings of George Floyd, Brionna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, which marked a renewed interest by Americans to address issues of racial injustice. Racial minorities and allies to racial minorities began calling upon themselves and others to understand how social and political systems marginalize minorities and how they uphold these systems, even if people are not purposely participating in subjugating others, we all have an obligation to understand the issues and work towards a solution. From an organizational standpoint, this demand was met with diversity training that was used to help educate communities on diversity, equity, and inclusion problems to which they may have been ignorant (Sugiyama et al., 2022). The American people were not unified in their approach to the country's racial divide. While some participated in protests against police violence and systemic racism and advocated for representation for people of color in America, other groups of people believed that racial inequity was a problem of the past and had no standing in current society. Those opposed to increased awareness of racial identity wanted to silence the ideas of this movement and make sure they would not catch on.

Regulation of ideas questioning the nation's racist history first emerged with an executive order passed by then President Donald Trump in September 2020. Executive Order 13950 prohibited federal agencies from hosting training promoting divisive topics, race and gender scapegoating, and race and sex stereotyping (Executive Office of the President, 2020). Under this directive, the ban included content such as using race or sex as a method of ascertaining someone's propensity for racism, responsibility for past racism, differential treatment, and disposition. It also prohibited generalizing groups of people according to race or sex as having shared traits or beliefs and prevented statements that made the individuals in these groups or the United States out to be racist. All of these topics were deemed to be divisive. President Donald Trump's firm stance on the issue trickled throughout the nation's public sector, including public school education. Local lawmakers wanted to silence intensive

scrutinization of the United States' racist past and its present impacts. It was important to conservative elected officials to make sure that this information was not being disseminated to students in publicly funded schools. An outpouring of laws, mirroring Executive Order 13950, began to emerge in 2021.

Since Executive Order 13950 passed, there have been 563 attempts by political figures to quell CRT (Alexander et al., 2023). Out of the attempts that have been successful, nearly all have targeted K-12 schools. While each state's laws or proposed laws are written slightly differently, most ideas within the laws are common from state to state because most of the authors of these laws have drawn information from three key sources: Saving American History Act, Executive Order 13950, and the Partisanship Out of Civics Act (Pollock et al., 2022, p. 17). A part of the common principles upheld by states with these laws includes the ideas that no class or required employee training should teach that individuals are superior or inferior to others because of their race, ethnicity, or sex. This prohibits the institutionalization of white supremacy values, but it could also reduce teacher's ability to discuss privileges or disadvantages that people have in society because of their identity. Other key features of these laws include attributing character traits or responsibilities to individuals because of their race, gender, or sex including being inherently racist or sexist, that moral character can be determined by an individual's race or sex, or that an individual should be held accountable for the historical actions of members of their identity group. The topics covered by these laws can minimize teaching students to be a part of the process for correcting past wrongdoings.

The laws also impact a teacher's ability to encourage critical analysis of founding texts and ideas. Many states include clauses that prohibit educators from teaching that slavery was not a divergence from the true ideas written in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights and that the United States is an inherently racist country. It is the right for citizens of the United States to be critical of their government, yet legislatures are taking that ability away from educators and students. While teachers should not force students to agree with the ideas, they should not be taken out of classrooms altogether. Additionally, teachers cannot be required to discuss current events, especially those that are considered divisive, and if an instructor chooses to do so they must offer a range of competitive perspectives. One of the last key features of the law in many states is that school credit cannot be awarded for involvement in public policy activities. A small number of states reference CRT directly in their

policies and legislation. When a provision references CRT by name, it has been more likely to be passed than laws that do not (Alexander et al., 2023). Anti-CRT legislation in public education is a partisan issue that has been favored by individuals and groups that are aligned with the political right. Those supportive of these policies claim that students are being “indoctrinated” by the political left with ideals that are “anti-American,” inflicting reverse racism on White students, teaching hatred, and causing division (Pollock et al., 2022, p. 21). Right-leaning individuals, with a heavy focus on parents who fall into this category, have been told that they need to “fight back” and “defend” their community against CRT, which has infiltrated their public school systems (Pollock et al., 2022).

The activities of interest groups and other political actors have dominated the push against CRT (Alexander et al., 2023). In many states, whether laws are present or not, parents and interest groups are called upon to be agents of change to ensure that “CRT” is removed from all curricula. In states that have institutionalized this ban, formal measures include state reporting systems. Twenty-two percent of states that have introduced bans relating to CRT have created reporting systems (Alexander et al., 2023). These systems allow the community to act as watchdogs for the state if they believe that “CRT” has been taught in their local school district (Pollock et al., 2022). In states where laws are not present, concerned parties are encouraged to compile evidence of CRT in their local schools and begin developing a case against it. They work to demolish CRT in schools through Freedom of Information requests, reporting websites, and a compilation of guides that help readers apply for positions on their local school board. This allows them to challenge the issue from multiple angles.

Despite frequent discussion about CRT on the political stage, CRT is viewed differently by the general public. An overwhelming majority of Americans are unfamiliar with CRT. As of 2021, 70% of all American citizens had no idea what CRT is (Safarpour et al., 2021). Of the 30% who claimed to be well versed in CRT, those individuals were more frequently men, republican, or had attended some level of college. Due to the lack of familiarity with critical race theory, it has little support for being taught in schools. Twenty-nine percent of people outright oppose teaching CRT in schools and 44% of people were neutral on the issue (Safarpour et al., 2021). Citizen’s neutrality and rejection of CRT does not mean that they are rejecting discussions related to racism completely. Half of Americans believe that schools should include lessons about racism and its impacts in classrooms (Safarpour et al., 2021).

Another relevant group concerning dialogues about CRT in schools are those who have jobs that are directly impacted by this passing legislation. This includes but is not limited to teachers, student teachers, paraprofessionals, and school administrators. When school-level public policy decisions are made, these staff members are working directly with students, and carrying out law makers' vision. They may not have complete autonomy in their roles, but they are able to sway how policy looks in practice (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014; Taylor, 2015). In the debate about CRT, the power these professionals have has been overlooked. They are the people responsible for carrying out anti-CRT laws when they are passed, and the laws have the potential to make their jobs difficult to fulfill. That is why the next section of this paper will dive more deeply into the attitudes, thoughts, and impacts these changing policies have on professionals working in or adjacent to public education.

How are Education Professionals Being Impacted?

Public school educators have the moral responsibility of molding young minds and to help kids grow up into productive adult citizens. If the responsibility of this task is not considered a feat on its own, educators and school administrators must constantly respond to the decisions that are being handed down by policymakers. Individuals who complete work that is shaped by education policy can influence policy decisions at times, but they have no voice in the outcome. School staff have a limited degree of discretion in how they carry out their responsibilities, which means that they can influence how anti-CRT policies are interpreted and executed as they emerge. It is for that reason that close attention must be paid to how individuals in the field of education are feeling the effects of anti-CRT legislation.

Teachers have varying degrees of understanding of policies concerning the ways they teach race, gender, and sexual orientation. There are few resources describing how knowledgeable teachers are about CRT, but teachers' attitude towards discussing race in the classroom has been documented. Over half of teachers and principals believe that policymakers should not impose restrictions on discussions of race and racism in the classroom (Woo et al., 2022). Despite the policies being unpopular amongst teachers, they are still being passed. It has become evident that there are many teachers who are unfamiliar with regulations in their localities dictating how race and inequity is discussed in schools. A recent study conducted by the RAND Corporation resulted in nearly 70% of teachers in states where anti-CRT laws have passed reporting that they

are unsure of or believed that no restrictions on these topics had been put in place (Woo et al., 2023). This information suggests that teachers are ill informed of the laws that regulate their profession, which leaves them vulnerable to unwittingly violating these laws. Teachers who identified as a person of color, worked in suburban schools, taught high school, or had these topics appear frequently in their subject matter like the humanities were more likely to know of these laws (Woo et al., 2023). This is likely due to the laws having a more pronounced effect on these educators.

For teachers aware of these policies, there is confusion concerning how to teach accurate information while obeying the laws. Sixty-five percent of recently passed policies and legislation targets classroom instruction and 76% of policies pertain to instructional materials (Alexander et al., 2023). The anti-CRT movement has required educators to exercise extreme caution when determining what they talk about in classrooms. Nearly a quarter of educators surveyed in the RAND Corporation study said restrictions on discussions of race, gender, identity, and sexual orientation in the classroom impacted their decisions on what is included in classroom instruction (Woo et al., 2023). In states where these laws have already passed, 52% of those surveyed said that the policies influenced their class curriculum. Additionally, school districts have limited their students' access to texts in school libraries. During the 2021-2022 school year, 1,648 books were banned (Friedman & Johnson, 2022). Forty-one percent of the banned books centered the LGBTQ+ community and 40% featured prominent characters of color. This massive censorship appears to conflict with American ideals of free speech.

There are also concerns that the new laws violate both students' and teachers' civil liberties. Teachers have the responsibility to share accurate and complete information about the world around them and the people in it with their students. The consideration of whether students have those rights has been inconclusive (Dunn, 2022). On one hand, precedent has been set in a federal district court case where an Arizona school removed a class focusing on Mexican Americans and the judge ruled that the school did not uphold the student's right to obtain that knowledge (Dee, 2022). The Supreme Court has yet to fully address this concern, but a prior decision grants that school restrictions are allowed to have discretion over books in schools, but that they must have sound reasons for taking away access to books that are already in libraries (Dunn, 2022). Additionally, teachers have the first amendment right to academic freedom in some academic contexts. However, K-12 teachers do not have academic freedom rights when acting in their job capacities, but university professors do.

The punishments for K-12 employees and school districts who do not comply with state legislation are steep. Approximately one-third of states that have passed anti-CRT laws have utilized funding as a method of keeping schools in line (Alexander et al., 2023). When schools are in violation, money essential to the school's functioning can be withheld. Retribution for CRT violations is not limited to district level consequences. School staff members have been held individually accountable for breaking the laws. In about 14% of states that have passed legislation, parents and other community members can sue the school district or teachers who are found to be teaching prohibited content (Alexander et al., 2023). Additionally, some states have included provisions within their policies that make it easy for violators to be caught. Twenty-eight percent of states have included a reporting mechanism that can be used by citizens to let the state know about infractions (Alexander et al., 2023). In extreme cases, teachers have lost their licenses and have been fired from their jobs.

The recent contention surrounding increased political scrutiny has become too much for many educators. Fourteen percent of teachers and 27% of principals have reported experiencing harassment because of critiques of how race is discussed or not in schools (Woo et al., 2022). Harassment towards educators involving critical race theory has ranged from verbal aggression, physical harassment, and even death threats. Almost half of all principals and 40% of teachers have reported experiencing stress because of the politicizing of schools' COVID-19 responses and how race is handled by their institution (Woo et al., 2022). Teachers have felt as if they are unable to show up in their classrooms as their authentic self (Woo et al., 2023). In some cases, this increased pressure has caused educators to leave the field completely. In the RAND Corporation study, a small number of teachers said that they were considering resigning from their jobs because of the hardships in the workplace. Some educators have already left the field because of the new laws. The reasons teachers and administrators have expressed for leaving include the increased stress and accusations that they have taught critical race theory with one former teacher remarking that they felt more like an activist than an educator in the classroom because of anti-CRT policies (Baptiste, 2022; Miranda, 2021).

Teachers resigning due to anti—CRT laws should pose a great concern to policy makers. The United States is facing a nation-wide teacher shortage, which has been difficult for states in their efforts to provide quality public education. The teacher shortage is an issue much

more expansive than the debate about CRT; but officials should avoid passing policies that make an existing problem even worse. There are many media sources that warn that anti-CRT legislation will have a negative impact on the number of teachers in the field. The professionals most impacted by resignations or firings would most likely be educators of color as they have been surveyed to be more supportive of CRT and general teaching about racism (Alexander et al., 2023). This could be at the detriment of many minority students who tend to have better outcomes when working with a teacher that has a similar background to them (Grissom et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

Policies sounding the alarm against CRT have emerged from the desire of conservative politicians to discourage children and young adults from obtaining knowledge about racial diversity and equity. When CRT is mentioned by politicians, they do so from the perspective of the hero. They preach that CRT is evil and meant to corrupt young minds, when in reality they are not discussing CRT at all. From its creation, CRT was meant to analyze systemic inequality present in the nation's legal system, but the idea that systems are not free from racism caught on in other academic disciplines. The idea influenced education researchers to apply the theory in education to examine the systemic barriers to success for students of color. Although researchers intended for that theory to be utilized in a similar manner to the legal field, the ties to the roots of critical race theory dwindled over time. This is because researchers tended to apply pieces of the theory to their scholarly work without consideration of the holistic principles that makes CRT what it is.

CRT's dilution was made even worse when the term was hijacked for political warfare. Prior, the term was primarily a concept that was most prominent in research communities; but CRT became a popular topic addressed by many politicians and news outlets. This twisted definition of CRT was used to define any discussion concerning race, racism, and racial inequality. It has even been occasionally used to refer to conversations on gender equity and sexual identity. By relating a broad range of concepts under a single vaguely related term, it has villainized a whole set of ideas that might have varying degrees of acceptance if they were considered individually. Despite bold claims about CRT by conservative politicians, the general public is unfamiliar with CRT and does not broadly support it, most likely due to having little knowledge about it.

CRT is not widespread in K-12 education, yet it has been made a policy priority. Over 500 attempts have been made to curb the spread of CRT, and the effort to enact more does not seem to be slowing down. The texts of these policies target how educators teach in the classroom and what materials they use to do so. Under many proposed regulations teachers are limited in their ability to explore concepts of unconscious biases, earned and unearned privileges, history from multiple perspectives, and how an individual's identity shapes how they relate to the world around them. Through these laws critical analysis of United States history and current events is hindered because it silences teachers who encourage use of different perspectives in their classrooms.

Most of the conversation surrounding CRT has focused on either politicians, parents, or school children, which does not showcase the full extent of the potential impact these laws can have. It is important that we spend more time learning about how teachers and other school staff are responding to anti-CRT laws because they are responsible for carrying out the policies once they have received legislative approval. What we know so far is that the potential of anti-CRT regulations has the ability to shape how teachers manage their classrooms. In states that have passed such laws, classroom curricula have changed to ensure that no violations are present.

It is concerning to know that many teachers who are impacted by laws concerning discussions on race, gender, and sexual orientation are unaware that laws have been passed in their states. This leaves them vulnerable to violations of the laws, which can have harmful consequences for them as teachers, but also the district as a whole.

There is room for researchers and the public to discuss what these laws are doing to children. Anti-CRT policies are prompting schools to ban lessons vital to understanding race relations in the United States, which has serious consequences. It is essential that people begin including educators in these policy decisions. Teachers, principals, and other school support staff are the ones responsible for interpreting the laws as they put them into practice. If educators do not fully understand what policy makers are trying to do, and vice versa, there is room for greater harm. There also needs to be time dedicated to analyzing why these laws are encouraging some educators to stop working in schools altogether. While that is not the case for most teachers, even losing a few educators is a significant problem.

Future research conducted by the author will focus on qualitative analysis and understanding how teachers and college professors perceive

anti-CRT laws that have been successfully implemented. This will be accomplished by having individuals review anti-CRT laws and being interviewed after reading the presented document. Interview questions will seek to find out how educators find the importance of understanding race and racism to be in their classrooms, whether they feel these laws limit their ability to discuss the topic, and whether the laws are enough to make them reconsider being teachers at all. In addition, it could be worthwhile to ask whether teachers would keep laws on the books, want to modify them in any way, or want to get rid of them altogether.

As Americans make sense of new policies that are changing the way kids learn about the world, there is still much work to be done by researchers. The debate on CRT is not likely to come to a quick end, so Americans must be mindful that these policies are asking them to make sacrifices on behalf of the nation's children. What researchers must determine is what the consequences are for putting anti-CRT laws in place. After that, it is up to the American people to decide whether they are willing to put these laws in place.

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